Consent Essential to Freedom—II

(Continued)

Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island held independent governments subject to the direct control of the Crown, but their own interests induced them to seek union with Canada. The British Parliament was only moved to interfere when it noted a genuine desire on the part of all sections in Canada to have a federal Government. The Coalition Government of 1864 in Canada which represented Upper and Lower Canada in equal proportions—as the constitution provided equal numbers of members in the Legislative Assembly for both the Provinces—furnished the first signal of a real sense of unity between the French and the British. The Charlottetown and Quebec Conferences were purely private affairs and had been summoned without official guidance. The major political parties of the country as represented by conservatives of Quebec (French) and Liberals of Ontario (British) were all one in their desire for Union. Hence in view of the unanimous will of the people to have Federation, there was no occasion for the British to insist on consent as pre-requisite to the grant of freedom. The Canadian representatives in the Quebec Convention framed their own constitution and the same was accepted by the British Parliament as the basis of the Canadian Federation Act of 1867.

No Parallel

India does not furnish any parallel to the Canadian case. Here the differences between the two major communities are so great that they cannot be reconciled under a scheme of federation. There is no desire on the part of Muslim League, which at present is the strongest political organisation of the Muslims, to accept a scheme of united India. Unless the Muslims in Muslim parts of India agree to forego their right to self-determination, they cannot be forced to seek union with Hindu India. The British Government should pursue the same old policy which it applied in case of Canada in reminding the political parties of India that they alone are the judge of their own constitution which should be framed by mutual consent. Any other course will be a gross betrayal of the past. For 37 years from 1840 to 1867, the French and British were ranged against each other in hostile groups in Canada, and the new Federal Act was not passed till both the communities had come to a definite understanding and had framed a constitution with their own free will. The Quebec Convention of 1864 which was composed of 33 delegates and represented all shades of opinion was the first systematic attempt to arrive at a compromise. The London Conference which subsequently followed was a culmination of the effort in the same direction.

Change of Heart

If the French had not agreed to merge Quebec into a bigger Canada, Federation would have been indefinitely delayed and all attempts to impose it in face of the united opposition of the French would only have invited the interference of the U.S.A. The French, if they chose, could hold a veto on the constitutional progress of Canada as a whole, but they were won over by a policy of benevolence on the part of British Government as well as by a real change of heart from the British Canadians.

The majority community in India has no moral scruples to gain the goodwill of the Muslims; it relies on British Government to enforce union. The Muslims, on their side, are determined to accept no compromise which does not recognise their right to determine their own future.

The only solution to the political deadlock lies in grouping together those Provinces of India for the purpose of Federation which have an explicit desire for the same as expressed through their respective majority communities. If the Muslim majority Provinces do not see any advantage in linking their future with Hindu majority Pro-

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STUDENTS AND POLITICS

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constantly occupies the mind of all people is the question of emancipation from the yoke of the foreign government. Secondly, in India there is not one people but several, not one society but many, and therefore the problem of Indian freedom becomes very complex.

Under the circumstances it is impossible for any intelligent person, whether he is a student or a man engaged in any business or profession, to keep a detached outlook on the quickly moving scenes in the political stage of the country. The students cannot remain indifferent to the vital issues upon which the fate of their whole people including themselves hangs. The students should not merely have the fullest freedom to study and discuss all political philosophies, systems and movements, both past and present, but they should have the right to express themselves freely on all current questions effecting their national life. To the extant to which the requirements of their academic studies and the preparations for future leadership permit they should have full opportunity to do all they can so advance their national cause, by following a constructive programme.

That is what our Qaid-e-Azam, Mr, Jinnah, also said in the course of a speech at Aligarh. He wanted students to devote their time and energy during their holidays to preach among the Muslim masses the national creed and policy of the Musalmans, and also to make efforts in their own measure for the educational, social and economic betterment of the Muslim people.

Of course, no one knows there might come a time when the call from the Qaid-e-Azam goes forth and then every Muslim, student or no student, will have to respond to it, suspending all other business.

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vinces, let them hold aloof. Even in Canada when the scheme of Federation was introduced in 1867, Prince Edward Island had refused to join, while Newfoundland has still not agreed to accept Union with Canada. If the Federal Scheme can work with success in Hindu majority Provinces, and the Muslim minorities can be duly protected through safeguards in the constitution, it may induce the Muslim majority Provinces later on to reconsider and modify their policy in regard to it. But the Hindus have no moral justification to put forward their numerical preponderance in India as a whole as an excuse for withholding the right of Muslim majority Provinces to determine their own future government. The history of Canada clearly proves that Federation was attained on the express desire of the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada and of Nova Scotia and new Brunswick to unite and that Prince Edward Island refused to join it at first, while the Provinces in the North-West and British Columbia agreed to accept it later on.

Gen. Cunningham Relieved

General Cunningham has been relieved of command of the British Army in the Middle East, it is officially announced. It is learned that General Cunningham is now on sick leave suffering from overstrain.

Major-General Ritchie has been appointed in General Cunningham's place.